

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of preparing a particulate material derived from mammalian hair to be used in the preparation of a paper or paperboard product, which particulate material is prepared by means of a process, which comprises the following steps:

(a) subjecting mammalian hair to an oxidation treatment in which the hair is contacted with an alkaline ~~or acidic~~ solution having a pH value in the range of from 9 to 11, which comprises a bleaching agent, over a period of time ranging from 5 minutes to 16 hours;

(b) separating the oxidised hair from the solution;

(c) drying the separated hair; and

(d) subjecting the dried hair to a treatment in which the hair is formed into a particulate material having an average particle size in the range of from 0.5 to 4 mm.

2. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the particulate material has an average particle size in the range of from 1 to 3 mm.

3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 2, wherein the particulate material has an average particle size in the range of from 1.5 to 2.5 mm.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the bleaching agent is selected from the group consisting of hypohalides, perborates, percarbonates, organic peroxides, and hydrogen peroxide.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein the bleaching agent comprises hydrogen peroxide.

6. (Canceled).

7. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the alkaline solution has a pH value in the range of from 10 to 11.

8.-9. (Canceled).

10. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the treatment in step (d) is a refining treatment.

11. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the hair is first subjected to a washing step in which soluble components are removed from the hair before the hair is subjected to step (a).

12. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the hair is derived from livestock.

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein the hair is derived from pigs.

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the particulate material comprises fibres.

15. (Previously Presented) A paper product comprising cellulose fibers mixed with the particulate material made by the process of claim 1.

16. (Previously Presented) A paperboard product comprising cellulose fibers mixed with the particulate material made by the process of claim 1.

17. (Currently Amended) Paper pulp comprising cellulose fibers mixed with ~~the particulate~~ the particulate material made by the process of claim 1.

18. (Currently Amended) A paper or paperboard product comprising cellulose fibers mixed with ~~at least 20 to 30~~ at least 20 to 30 wt. % of a particulate material derived from mammalian hair ~~to be~~

~~used in the preparation of a paper or paperboard product~~, which particulate material is prepared by means of a process, which comprises the following steps:

(a) subjecting mammalian hair to an oxidation treatment in which the hair is contacted with an alkaline or acidic solution, which comprises a bleaching agent over a period of time ranging from 5 minutes to 16 hours;

(b) separating the oxidised hair from the solution;

(c) drying the separated hair; and

(d) subjecting the dried hair to a treatment in which the hair is formed into a particulate material having an average particle size in the range of from 0.5 to 4 mm.